CHURCH AND STATE

IN

AMERICA.

BY

HENRY W. BELLOWS, D. D.

CHURCH AND STATE IN AMERICA.

A DISCOURSE

GIVEN AT WASHINGTON, D. C., AT THE INSTALLATION OF

REV. FREDERIC HINCKLEY,

AS PASTOR OF THE

UNITARIAN CHURCH,

JANUARY 25, 1871,

BY

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DISCOURSE.

"Render, therefore, unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."—*Matt.* 22: 21.

"My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight."—*John* 18: 36.

"Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God."—*Rom.* 15: 22.

We are assembled to install a Christian minister over a church representing a small and unpopular sect of Christian believers in the capital of the nation. Towards this city, because of its political headship and representative character, all the various religious denominations of the land are now turning their thoughts and directing their plans, seeking to establish here missionary churches, and to obtain whatever moral influence they can in favor of their own faith and polity, by publishing through able ministers, in attractive and commodious temples, the religious convictions and opinions they entertain. It is an honorable and useful rivalry in service to the truth in which these various religious bodies are engaged, and the Unitarian denomination is, I trust, preparing to enter the lists in vindication and propagation of the primitive faith of the Apostles, which it claims to possess. Yet it is not the peculiar views of the Unitarians that I propose to define or defend on this occasion. There is another topic, to which recent events of world-wide interest have drawn general attention, which, it seems to me, no place and no occasion could offer a fairer or fitter opportunity to discuss than the present—I mean the relations of Church and State in this country.

We are standing here, in the District of Columbia, upon purely national ground—under the sole dominion and protection of the General Government, with the Constitution of the United States—without the intervention of State laws—as the direct guide and guarantee of all political rights and duties. To this ground, in view of the national Capitol, and under the

protection of Congress, may come Jews and Christians, believers and infidels, orthodox and heterodox, great sects and small sects, Roman Catholics and Protestants, Methodists and Universalists, Episcopalians and Quakers, Trinitarians and Unitarians, Theists, Polytheists, Atheists, Pagans, Mahommedans, Chinese worshippers of their ancestors, Indian worshippers of the Great Spirit—claiming the equal right to worship, or not to worship, according to the dictates of their own consciences, the customs of their parents, or the caprices of their own ignorance—to propagate and defend their opinions, to enjoy unmolested their own views, and to share equally the protection of the national law. It is an anomalous and extraordinary state of things. But, if you turn from the door of the Catholic cathedral, the Protestant Episcopal church, the Methodist chapel, the Friends' meeting-house, the Jewish synagogue, towards the Capitol, you see at once the necessity and the blessedness of the liberty of conscience and the freedom of worship guaranteed by the Constitution. For there, beneath that dome, over which the Goddess of Liberty presides, sit the representatives of more than forty States and Territories, stretching over twenty-five degrees of latitude and fifty-eight degrees of longitude—States originally settled, some by Puritans and some by Cavaliers; now by Roman Catholics and now by Quakers; here by Jews and there, in part, by Pagans; and since peopled and occupied by representatives of the most divers shades of Christian and non-Christian opinion.

Upon what principle, except that of an essential and permanent divorce of Church and State, could a political union be established and maintained in a country like ours? What form of Christianity could have been established by law as the national faith or church, under the special protection and management of the civil power, either at the origin or at any later period of the Federal Union? What terrible complications and antagonisms would have vexed our politics, if questions of religious faith and ecclesiastical polity had been allowed to enter into the Constitution, and become subjects of political regulation? There is not a country on the globe that could so ill

bear union between Church and State as this. In the oldest States of Europe, dating back to periods when the people had no share either in the government of State or Church, the union between them, most natural and most necessary in imperial or aristocratic eras of history, has yet caused at all times trouble, and at some times ruin, and is now one of the chief sources of anxiety in every highly-civilized monarchical country. England is cautiously unbuckling one by one the straps that harness the Church and the State together. France is dissolving under the despotism which this union had alone rendered possible, and Church and State are engulfed in the whirlpool which is finally produced everywhere when national ideas and national institutions are found in conscious or unconscious conflict. Italy has just entered Rome—Rome, so many times and in so many different spheres mistress of the world—in imperial power, in military sway, in jurisprudence, in arts, in religion—entered it to discrown the Pope as a temporal ruler, and dismiss him as a political sovereign from her capital, by the will of Roman Catholics themselves, while he stays the unmolested and beloved spiritual head of the vast church of which he has so long been the pure and revered pontiff.

Government, it must be remembered, is such a profound necessity of society, and especially of national society, that practically it has and can have no fixed conditions and no unchanging forms. Every form of government has at some time been justified by necessity. The tyrants of Athens and Rome ruled by divine right, when Athens and Rome, in a state of military anarchy, deserved and admitted no better governors.

There is a science of politics, and happy is the nation where the purest theory of the State can be incarnated in public law and custom. But nations are not the birth of theories, but of circumstances and providential necessities. Statesmanship, or the art of politics, must not be confounded with the science of politics. Statesmen who make or change constitutions are bound to make or change them to suit the wants and possibilities of the people for whom they exist. They cannot wisely or profitably force upon a nation a government which on scientific prin-

ciples may be better or best; they must take that form of government which the nation can bear or support. Doubtless political *science* would always divorce the Church and the State; but living history has not in the past forbidden the banns, nor will statesmanship yet justify the separation in all cases. It is impossible to doubt that for long ages the union of Church and State was absolutely necessary and beneficial, and the averter of more evils than it caused. Very likely holy Russia finds ample justification in the union she so jealously maintains between the Church and the State; but the fact is a curious commentary on the peculiar sympathy which politicians assume to exist between two nations, America and Russia, which, in respect of autocratic and democratic rule, popular superstition and popular enlightenment, are at opposite poles.

Happily our founders were compelled, and by a blessed necessity, to introduce at the very beginning a truly scientific principle into the foundations of the national law and life. They declared a complete and perpetual divorce between the Church and the State. They were learned statesmen, and wise and careful students of history. They recalled freshly all the fearful religious wars of Germany, France, and England, and knew how the succession wars in England, and the struggles of Huguenot and Catholic princes in France and the Netherlands had deluged both lands in blood, and kept the crown swimming in gore. They most wisely, most blessedly, and with a wisdom even greater than they knew, determined that religion and politics in this country should have no other connection than in the private hearts of the people. The State should know no Church. It should respect and honor religion, and protect the rights and worship of all religionists; but it should support, it should favor, no branch of Christian faith, as against others; nor Christianity as against other religious.

In some other countries, this might be, nay would be a perilous experiment. Religion is a great public interest. The well-being, the order, and security of the nation depends upon its support and nourishment. It must not be, it cannot be suffered to fall into neglect. If our founders had said or thought that

the State derived no necessary support from the religion of the people, and that it was a matter of no consequence to statesmen, whether public worship and religious teaching were maintained or not, they would have shown themselves blind leaders of the blind. No! They saw and felt that in our country, the people were intelligent and thoughtful enough to maintain religion in ways suited to their own convictions and wants, by voluntary or local support; that the Church did not need, nay would not endure, connection with, or support from the State; nor the State interference or direction from the Church. They felt in advance, just what experience has fully shown, that religion would flourish best in America in perfect freedom, and that its influence upon the public weal—economically, morally, politically—would be vastly greater in its indirect or informal character, than through any direct or established union, which in any one, or any ten forms, it might have with the State. And so, providentially and benignantly the State and the Church were separated in America. It is still a subject of curious interest and inquiry among the noblest thinkers and observers in England by what impulses and methods the voluntary system in religion works in America. No amount of written or second-hand testimony to its success, ever seems quite to satisfy them. The experience is so novel and contrary to all their past usage and present custom that it baffles their imagination. We, on the contrary, have become so used to it, that we do not even appreciate its difficulties elsewhere, its blessing at home, or the necessity of watching against any encroachments upon it in our own land.

The very words "Church and State" have an un-American meaning, and correspond only in a figurative way to what we really mean when we speak, as Americans, of the civil and religious interests of the nation.

When Louis XIV said, "The State—it is I," he simply epitomized the long-prevailing, and, perhaps, long-needed opinion existing among European and Asiatic peoples, that nations live in their rulers—an idea which is only a little enlarged when nations are supposed to live in their governments. Still, to a greater or less degree in older nations, the

national life, honor, and liberty, are loooked for as existing in and as secured and protected mainly by the national government. We do not receive this idea in America. The Government, in certain respects only, represents the nation; does certain things for the nation; speaks for it with foreign powers; makes war and peace; forms treaties; imposes taxes; and regulates coins and currency.

We are, indeed, greatly concerned for its purity, honor, energy, and wisdom. But we deliberately confine its sphere to the fewest possible things, and we admit its interference with nothing that can exist without its aid. It is a machine, necessarily running on human hearts and wills, but a machine after all. It represents, but is not the nation. It often does things for which we are *legally* responsible—for which we are not *morally* responsible. If our business agent steals we must pay, but we need not own ourselves thieves. Because the Government has no religion as a government, it does not follow that the Nation has no religion, much less that the governors, in their private character, have none. The nation has so much religion that it will not allow its political agent or servant, the Government, to charge itself with its religious affairs. It attends to its religion in other ways, and simply instructs its Government to leave faith and worship to the people to manage it after their own several fashions.

Historically considered, and as a matter of fact, there can be no question of two things; that the United States of America is, 1. A Christian Nation; and, 2. A Protestant Nation; that is to say, the overwhelming faith of the people is both Christian and Protestant. But the Government, as a Government, is neither Christian nor Protestant, except by an unconscious and inevitable influence of custom, and usage, and feeling, indirectly brought to bear upon it; and this simply because the Government is not a religious agent or representative.

Nor is the Constitution intended to be, nor is it, a full expression of the national life. It is properly confined to what concerns the political principles and interests of the nation. We found, in our recent war, how much greater and stronger the

national life was than the Constitution. Excepting that all constitutions profess justice, truth, and honor, there is neither an avowedly moral nor a purposely religious character to the Constitution. The moral sense of the nation, ever improving and increasing, cannot be shut up in a fixed document; the religious faith of the nation, continually changing and heightening, cannot be stereotyped in a national creed. The Constitution confines itself to guaranteeing religion, liberty, and the equality of all religious confessions before the law. It makes no declaration of faith, theistic or otherwise; it denies no creed, Christian or non-christian; and this not from indifference to religion, or indifference to morality, or indifference to Christianity in the nation, but from respect to the moral and religious feelings and rights of the nation. Religion is, and always has been, too deep and general an interest in America, too earnestly disputed, too zealously investigated, too variously because too thoughtfully considered, to allow of any interference with it from the State. Were the chief interest in religion resident in the governing class, in politicians or public officers, or were religion valued in this country as it has been in many others, chiefly as an instrument of political power and management of the masses, its appearance in the Constitution might be justified. Its non-appearance there is the greatest testimony any nation ever offered to its existence where it belongs, in the minds and hearts and lives of the people; in the national heart, and not in the government head or the political mouth.

It is curious enough that, just at the moment when vigorous operations are springing up for the purpose of engrafting theological dogmas upon the Constitution, as though the nation were Godless or Christless, because God and Christ do not appear in the Constitution, the older nations should be sending deputations of anxious and earnest Christians to America to learn what the cause and methods of our warmer and more popular religious and Christian life are. In other nations, where God and Christ appear in State constitutions in elaborate articles of faith upheld by public law; where bishops, as bishops, sit in the House of Lords, or are prime ministers; where reli-

gion is established and supported by the State, the Christian faith languishes, is violently attacked and denied by the thinking class, loses the sympathy and support of the working people, and presents an anxious problem to its true friends. In the freedom here allowed to religion, in the blessed emulation of the various churches and denominations, in the unchecked right of free inquiry, in the absolute dissociation of Church and State, Christianity finds her free development, adapts her forms to the needs and possibilities of all schools of experience and all classes of society, becomes an object of general or universal interest and puts forth new powers, and every day gets a stronger hold of the national heart. Other forms of faith, derived from less advanced stages of human society, but to which blood and race and memory give a sacred character, here have equal rights with Christianity before the law and the Constitution. But is it because the nation, in its heart, recognizes the moral equality, or proper rivalry of Judaism, Mormonism, Paganism, Mohammedanism with Christianity, as religions equally divine, authoritative, and worthy of the people's attention and support? Or is it simply because the nation, overwhelmingly Christian in its heart, has the wise magnanimity, as well as the high statesmanship, to declare and to feel that political rights shall not depend on religious preferences or theological majorities; shall not be denied to Jew or Gentile, Pagan or Infidel; that Christianity shall not owe its life to the patronage of the Constitution, nor religious truth be at the mercy of acts of Congress? Is it not because we *are* a Christian nation that we are a tolerant Government? Is it not the Christianity in the heart of the people that makes them not only fearless of what Polytheism, Paganism, Judaism, or any other imperfect or partial religion, can do in a free nation, with a free press and a free life, but even disposed to rejoice that those who are not able to share the high and blessed privileges of their Christian faith, are permitted to enjoy the full privileges of their political freedom, among the chiefest of which is the right of not being constrained in their religious opinions, or disfavored in conscience by the law?

When, then, vigorous and earnest men of high and pure character constitute themselves, as they are now doing, into public societies, to agitate for the introduction into the Constitution of the United States of declarations of faith in "Almighty God, as the source of all authority and power in civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler among the Nations, and His revealed will of supreme authority, in order to constitute a Christian government"—while respecting both the motives and the perfect right of such excellent persons to agitate the question, it is highly important to protest at the very outset of these movements against the retrograde policy, the perilous consequences, the anti-American character of such a measure. The poly-theism, the tri-theism, the atheism in America are fair and proper subjects of criticism, of reprobation, of discussion and dissuasion in the press, the pulpit, or the platform, and in literature. Christians may properly unite to defend their own faith, and to discourage and disprove every faith that opposes or denies it; but one field they cannot enter without undoing the greatest work our fathers accomplished. They cannot erect their dogmatic fortresses or plant their theological batteries within the Constitution! What is proposed in the amendment, already endorsed by several large conventions—already, if I am not mistaken, brought in an independent form by a Senator from Illinois before the Senate, is to commit the Constitution of the United States to these three points: 1. That all civil government owes all its authority and power to Almighty God. 2. That the Lord Jesus Christ is the Ruler among the Nations. 3. That His revealed will, the Bible, is of supreme authority in a Christian government.

There is a sense in which these propositions are true; and they are becoming propositions for Christian churches and conventions to entertain. But if they were absolutely true to all Christians, as they are only so to a great majority, they are wholly out of place in the Constitution. They overlook the fact that the Constitution is not a religious or theological or even Christian charter, but belongs to Jew and Gentile, Christian and Pagan alike.

Each of these articles directly contradicts the whole spirit and intention of the national will, as expressed in its existing Constitution. The Government of this country derives its power and authority from the people of the nation, and in no proper political sense from any other source. Our governors are not sacred persons, governors by divine right, like Old World kings. The Government is not an altar, but a machine—not a master, but a servant. We are not under a theocracy, like the ancient Jews. Christians, individually, or even collectively, recognize the fact that civil government is an ordinance of God for them, and, like everything else valuable and true, has a religious obligation; but the power and authority of civil government does not in the least degree depend upon the recognition or acknowledgment of this fact, any more than the sun's heat depends on our theory of it. Nobody can be required by the civil power to obey the laws of the land as laws of Almighty God; nor can anybody excuse himself from obeying them on the ground that he does not recognize any such authority or power as Almighty God. In seeming to strengthen we really weaken the civil power by calling in the power and authority of Almighty God as its political foundation, for we acquit those who deny this authority from an obligation to obey it. Leave the civil power where it rests, on its necessity, its utility, and the will of the people, and let the Christian sentiment which recognizes God in the "powers that be" come in to the voluntary support of civil authority, without implying that those who are not Christians and not theists are in any way released, and you get all the advantages without any of the disadvantages of the union of civil and religious authority.

But the first is not half as dangerous and inadmissible as the second clause of the proposed amendment, "That the Lord Jesus Christ is the ruler among the nations." Here is a positive sectarian dogma of a certain immense majority, yet still only a part, of the Christian Church, which it is proposed to lodge permanently in the Constitution. However respectable, however excellent, however numerous the believers in this dogma may be—however large their present majority—it is a well-known

fact that in no sense in which they mean to use it is this proposition received by some of the most scholarly, thoughtful, intelligent and blameless Christian sects. What must the Unitarians, the Universalists, the Christians, the Hicksite Friends, the Free Religionists, the Jews say to the proposition that the Lord Jesus Christ is the ruler among the nations? They none of them believe that Jesus Christ and Almighty God are the same person. They all believe that *Almighty God* is the ruler among the nations, and *not Jesus Christ.* Nay, it is because they do not believe that Jesus Christ is God, or the ruler among the nations, that Trinitarian Christians wish to get this declaration of their own opposite faith put by a majority vote into the Constitution. It is a supposably conscientious attempt on their part to enlist the Constitution in the service of theological faith. Seeing the hopelessness of putting down these sects by argument, they must be discountenanced and disfranchised by the civil power! Will the weaker and feebler sects of Christians in this country look on indifferently or inactively, and see this "Holy alliance" of the stronger sects conspiring to get the theological opinions of a majority engrafted upon the Constitution of the United States; and will the untheological, unsectarian people of this country, who care little for the distinctions in ecclesiastical or dogmatic Christianity, allow this keg of theological gunpowder, which the lovers of creeds are so innocently wheeling about the country, to be set down upon the very corner-stone of their civic temple? I warn them, I warn the country, that such an amendment would plant the seeds of disunion and religious war in this nation, and that they wholly misunderstand the temper and character of the American people in expecting to get their consent to so perilous an abuse of theological influence, so open an attack upon the sacred divorce between Church and State.

But the third proposition is, because more definite, still more objectionable. It settles peremptorily two questions for the nation, that the nation means to keep open and out of politics: 1st. That our Government (not the nation) is a Christian Gov-

ernment; and 2d. That the Bible is Christ's and therefore God's revealed will, and is of supreme authority.

First. That this is a Christian nation, but one refusing to consider or acknowledge or disclaim any theological or religious character in its government, has already been sufficiently set forth. For Christian reasons and in the interest of Christianity, the Christian wisdom and faith in the hearts of American citizens has warned them to keep religious, theological, and ecclesiastical questions wholly out of their civil constitution and their politics. They expect to be, they claim to be, a more and not less Christian nation on this account, and they will not consent to needlessly wound or discourage the civil loyalty of Jews, pagans, infidels, or non-christian men, by setting up a target for theological hostility in a Constitution which belongs to the whole American people, and ultimately to all mankind. Second. That the Bible, meaning King James' version, is God's or Christ's revealed will and of Supreme authority is disputed by Roman Catholics, by Jews so far as its most precious part, the New Testament, is concerned; by learned men in Christendom who are settling and unsettling its canon every day; by all consistent believers in the right of private judgment—who must come back to reason and conscience as the final authority at last; while the nature of inspiration itself is thoroughly undetermined among competent authorities. Yet the plain object of this amendment is to put the Bible in its old character, as a literally and plenarily inspired book into the Constitution, and through it, to keep it in the public schools against the wishes and protest of the Roman Catholics or of unbelievers. In short, a more or less numerous class of American Christians, are, if they have their way, about settling for the whole country its questions and doubts upon some of the most difficult, disputed, and anxious subjects of theological opinion. They propose to settle just what Christianity is, just who Christ was, just what the Bible is, just what the relations are of the civil and the religious powers in this, and all countries. The nation will object to this claim to omniscience and omnipotence. It will not deputize to

any self-called convention, a duty so serious, an office so needless, a purpose so perilous as this.

I have said that historically considered, or as a matter of present fact, this *is* a Christian nation, Christian in its origin, temper, prevailing faith and reputation; and that the absence of any declaration of its theistic and Christian faith in its political constitution does not touch the fact of its Christianity, nor bring it into doubt in other nations, nor render it questionable at home. We refuse to bring theological and religious questions, because of their importance and the immense jealousies they arouse, and because of their nature as questions between the individual soul and its maker, into the political charter, which is designed to express the common and equal rights of all citizens. The Government, meanwhile, is neither Christian nor non-christian, simply because the nation in its Christian strength and sense of justice and charity, declines to make the political platform, the place where it announces its creed; the government, its religious agent or representative. It has learned from experience in other countries, the dangers of the union between Church and State, religion and politics. For its Christian faith and character, the nation refers the world to its religious statistics, its newspapers, its charities, its general life, its literature, its homes, and its temples of worship. It would be amusing, if it were not mournful, to observe that among the inducements to introduce the theistic and theological amendment to which I have referred into our constitution, the excellent president of the recent convention, March, 1870, at Pittsburg, called the attention of the body to the fact that the Southern States, when in active rebellion, and in arms against the States, did introduce into their new constitution this very recognition of God, which he desires us to follow them in introducing to our own Constitution. At the very moment they were treasonably violating the law of the God they professed to recognize as the head of the State of which they were citizens, they were ostentatiously putting his name and political sovereignty into their fundamental law, and making Him the sponsor of their rebellion! Can we not very clearly distinguish between that religion which cries

Lord, Lord, in political and civil documents, and that religion, which without State profession, does the thing which he says in its national or common life?

But this is not only historically, and as a matter of fact, a *Christian* nation—it is also, in the same sense, a *Protestant* nation. The overwhelming majority of the people are Protestant in name, and temper, and purpose. But surely the Government is not a Protestant Government. A Roman Catholic, a Jew, is eligible to the office of President, or Chief Justice, Senator, or Representative. Did Mr. Taney's position, as Chief Justice, Catholic as he was, compromise the Protestant character of this nation? Certainly not; it showed plainly its Protestant spirit and character. Had this been a Roman Catholic nation or Government no Protestant could have been made Chief Justice, much less President. We have had several Unitarian Presidents, the Adamses, Mr. Fillmore, by profession, perhaps Jefferson and Lincoln, in fact; but does that prove that this nation, as a matter of fact, is not still not only Protestant, but also Trinitarian and "orthodox" in its dogmatic faith? Certainly not. The nation does not look for theological qualifications, or even forms of religious conviction, in its political agents. It ought to look, and would that it looked more, to moral character and political ability. But God avert the day when it shall inquire into the theological opinions of its candidates for political office!

It is the vast importance of keeping the political and the religious movements and action of the people apart, and in their own independent spheres, that makes wise citizens, alike on religious and on civil grounds, look with alarm and jealousy on any endeavors, on the part either of Protestants or Catholics, to secure any special attention or support, any partial or separate legislation or subsidies from either the National or the State Governments. I have already told you that Protestants, representing the great sects in this country, are now laboring, by moveable conventions, to mould public opinion in a way to give finally a theological character to the Constitution. In a much more pardonable spirit, because in accordance with their histo-

rical antecedents, their hereditary temper, and their ecclesiastical logic, the Roman Catholics in this country are, in many States, and every great city of the Union, using the tremendous power they possess as the make-weight of parties, to turn the public treasure in a strong current into their own channels, and thus secure an illegitimate support as a religious body. – It is not too much to guess, that more than half of the ecclesiastical wealth of the Roman Catholic Church in America, against the wishes and convictions of a Protestant country, has been voted to it in lands and grants by municipalities and legislatures, trading for Irish votes. The Catholic Church thus has a factitious prosperity and progress. It is largely sustained by Protestants—not on grounds of charity and toleration, or from a sense of its usefulness, (that were well privately done,) but from low and unworthy political motives in both the great parties of the country. Now, that Roman Catholics themselves should take advantage of their solidarity as a people and a Church, and of the power of their priesthood, with all uninformed and some enlightened communicants, to turn the political will into a machine for grinding their ecclesiastical grist, is not unnatural, nor wholly unpardonable. But it is fearfully dangerous to them and to us. Their success—due to the sense of the Protestant strength which thinks it can afford to blink their machinations, or to the preoccupation of the public mind with the emulative business pursuits of the time, or to the confidence which the American people seem to feel in the final and secure divorce of Church and State—their unchecked success encourages them to bolder and more bold demands, and accustoms the people to more careless and more perilous acquiescence in their claims. The principle of authority in religion, which has so many temperamental adherents in all countries; the inherent love of pomp and show in worship, strongest in the least educated; a natural weariness of sectarian divisions, commonest among lazy thinkers and stupid consciences—all these play into the hands of the Romanists, and they are making hay while the sun shines.

There are no reviews, no newspapers in this country, so bold and unqualified; none so unscrupulous and so intensely zealous

and partizan; none so fearless and outspoken as the Catholic journals. They profess to despise Protestant opposition; they deride the feeble tactics of other Christian sects; they are more ultramontane, more Roman, more Papal, than French, German, Austrian, Bavarian, Italian believers; they avow their purpose to make this a Roman Catholic country, and they hope to live on the Protestant enemy while they are converting him. They often put their religious faith above their political obligation, and, as bishops and priests, make it a duty to the church for their members to vote as Catholics rather than as American citizens. Not what favors the peace, prosperity, and Union of the nation, but what favors their church, is the supreme question for them at every election; and American politicians, for their predatory purposes, have taught them this, and are their leaders in it.

Now, as an American citizen, I say nothing against the equality of the rights of the Roman Catholics and the Protestants—both may lawfully strive, in their unpolitical spheres, for the mastery, and the law may not favor or disfavor either; nor can anything be done to prevent Roman Catholics from using their votes as Roman Catholics, if they please. It is against the spirit, but not against the letter of the Constitution. At any rate it cannot be helped; only, it may compel Protestants to form parties and vote as Protestants against Roman Catholic interests, which would be a deplorable necessity, and lead, sooner or later, through religious parties in politics, to religious wars. The way to avoid such a horrible possibility—alas, such a threatening probability for the next generation—is at once to look with the utmost carefulness and the utmost disfavor upon every effort on the part of either Protestants or Catholics to mix up sectarian or theological or religious questions, with national and State and city politics.

Every appeal of a sect, a denominational church, or sectarian charity of any description, to the General Government, or State or city governments, for subsidies or favors, should be at once discountenanced and forbidden by public opinion, and made impossible by positive statute. The Protestant sects in this

country should hasten to remove from their record any advantages whatsoever guaranteed to them by civil law to any partiality or sectarian distinction. The most important privilege they enjoy by law in most of the States, is the right of keeping the Bible in the public schools. It is a privilege associated with the tenderest and most sacred symbol of the Protestant faith—the Bible. To exclude it from the public schools is to the religious affections of Protestants like Abraham's sacrifice of his only son. When it was first proposed, I felt horror-stricken, and instinctively opposed it; but I have thought long and anxiously upon the subject, and have, from pure logical necessity and consistency, been obliged to change—nay, reverse my opinion. Duty to the unsectarian character of our civil institutions demands that this exclusion should be made. It will not be any disclaimer of the importance of the Bible in the education of American youth, but only a concession that we cannot carry on the religious with the secular education of American children, at the public expense and in the public schools. So long as Protestant Christians insist, merely in the strength of their great majority, upon maintaining the Bible in the public schools, they justify Roman Catholics in demanding that the public money for education shall be distributed to sects in proportion to the number of children they educate. This goes far to break up the common school system of this country, and, if carried out, must ultimately tend to dissolve the Union, which morally depends upon the community of feeling and the homogeneity of culture produced by an unsectarian system of common schools.

Let the Protestant portion of this country, the vast majority, by its utter fidelity to the divorce of Church and State, of religion and politics, throw all theological, religious, and ecclesiastic questions back where they belong—into the arena of logic, historical evidence, literary or religious discussion; into pulpits, synods, religious conferences—and it will quickly appear whether this is a Protestant country or not. It is only because we foolishly allow our jesuitical friends to drag the Roman Catholic Church into the political circus, and hitch the horses of party and legislation to its wheels, that we see its alarming progress.

They, we may be sure, intoxicated with present success, will do their utmost to keep religious affairs mixed in with all political questions. They thrive by it. But will they not pause to consider whether their present swift advance on this route, and by this method, is not the road to ruin? Has not the history and and fate of American slavery been a solemn lesson for them? Did not that "*domestic* institution" attempt to make itself a national one—establish its propaganda, send its missionaries to Congress, and compel its whole political life to turn upon the question of extending its dark area? Did it not long prosper and thrive upon the political pabulum of threatening and fear, and spread until it invaded territories consecrated to liberty—nay, until it seemed almost ready to seize the national capital, flag, archives and all, and rule over a nation held together by the black marble key-stone of negro slavery, pronounced a divine institution? Only slowly the nation comprehended its purpose; for it was an inevitable purpose—a part of the logic of slavery—not so much the fault as the fatal proclivity of its heirs; but when the nation did fully comprehend, it rose and cut down the accursed upas at a stroke, and tore its roots out of the national soil! Will the American people—a Christian, Protestant nation—see any form of sacramental, hierarchical, theological priestcraft, getting possession of their politics and government, cheating them before their very eyes out of their rights and liberties, and not, sooner or later, treat it just as they treated slavery?—nay, override the Constitution to save the nation threatened with a government of priests?

It is the certainty of this result, so much more fearful for them than for us, that makes it the duty of Protestants to warn the Catholic hierarchy and the politicians that support them, whither they are tending; while they carefully cleanse their own skirts from every stain of political commerce, or want of fidelity to the fundamental law that keeps Church and State apart in our country.

Of course, I shall be asked what, if religion and politics are wholly divorced, we are to do with Bible oaths, with prayer in Congress, with presidential piety in proclamations and mes-

sages. I think very little harm would come to the morality and piety of the country if they were all omitted. Of course, the laws concerning oaths would require important amendments. A lie in matters of contract would have to be punished like a broken oath. Everything else involves no principle, because it is voluntary, and matter not of law, but custom. If the President is a Christian, surely his office does not forbid his speaking as a Christian, and it is no offence to Jew or Gentile that he has and professes his Christian faith, even in a public document; but good taste and public policy might be better served by his writing wholly in his official and political capacity.

So long as custom and usage warrants Christian prayers in Congress and Legislatures, there can be no objection of principle, if objection is not taken by those who elect to hear them; they do not commit those who do not choose to be committed, and are not of legislative or political value or weight. Still, we should not be *less Christian* in character or reputation, if, on grounds of political duty and separation of Church and State, even in their shadows, we omitted them all.

Let us understand, in conclusion, that Religion and Politics have their proper meeting-place, and a far closer union than any between Church and State, in the private conscience, will, heart of every citizen! Politics to a religious man will have a tremendous religious obligation, a full religious light, a profound religious influence. Politics to a Christian will be discharged in the light and under the impulses and motives that warm a Christian's heart. But his Christian heart will teach him justice, charity, firmness, candor, and the importance of keeping theological and ecclesiastical ends (however important in themselves) within their own lawful sphere.

As Unitarians, a long persecuted and disfranchised sect in Great Britain, and still suffering injustice from public sentiment and religious bodies in this country, we are naturally specially sensitive to all questions touching religious liberty. It has seemed fitting then to use this valuable occasion, spite of its personal and denominational interest, for a larger purpose. Indeed, we need here in the capital, a better place than this

obscure chapel affords, to plead for Christian liberty, with the people of this country. Our position as a sect gives us a special freedom to deal in a broad and candid and fearless way with questions of this character, which are seldom approached by denominations bound in creed, without foregoing conclusions and sectarian biasses. I am conscious in this appeal of none, and have honestly endeavored to avoid all—not by a mush of concession and compromise—but by fidelity to certain great principles, let them cut where they would. May we not hope that the Unitarian denomination here, and through the country, will feel the urgent importance of maintaining in this capital a church worthy of our grand principles, and a fitting place from which to address the representative men who have charge of this Government from time to time, touching the civil and religious rights of the nation, and specially at those crises when great questions arise touching the freedom and peace and stability of our country.